

Hot Water!

The Scenario: You've just returned to your country home from a shopping trip to town, some 20 miles upriver, with all the fixings for a weekend barbecue with your family, including a fresh bag of your favorite mesquite charcoal and some other sundries: coffee filters, kitty litter for your pet Persian, Sheba, and some fresh aquarium sand for your daughter's collection of goldfish — all of whom she's named Moby Dick. No sooner are you in the door than the power goes out. And, calling the electric company to report the outage, you quickly discover the loss of power is now the least of your worries.

There's been a serious accident at the nuclear power plant 5 miles upriver from town, and radioactive steam is now escaping into both the air and the river. Containment of the leak and restoration of power are both currently indefinite. You are advised to stay indoors and drink only bottled water until further notice, as they now presume the river water is contaminated well past your location.

The Challenge: You consider getting everyone into the car and evacuating. But, given the prevailing winds, your only way out would certainly put you right in the path of the leak — so that's really not an option. And while your large house can be sealed up easily — and there's enough food for a week or more if need be — aside from some beer and a few bottles of soda, you have no bottled water! So what are you going to drink? You must devise a way to provide enough safe drinking water for your family of four to weather the crisis for at least a week.

What You've Got: In addition to everything mentioned, you have a garage full of tools, a 5-gallon plastic jug your family uses to collect spare change, and anything else that would normally be found in a typical house. So prepare to hunker down, break out the board games, and protect your nuclear family. Good luck (to all of us).

Send a detailed description of your MakeShift solution with sketches and/or photos to makeshift@makezine.com by Oct. 28, 2011. If duplicate solutions are submitted, the winner will be determined by the quality of the explanation and presentation. The most plausible and most creative solutions will each win a MAKE T-shirt and a MAKE Pocket Ref. Think positive and include your shirt size and contact information with your solution. Good luck! For readers' solutions to previous MakeShift challenges, visit makezine.com/makeshift.

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